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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 002159

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [AEMR](#) [AMGT](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [CVIS](#) [EFIN](#) [ETRD](#) [IZ](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: TFI201: AMMAN SITREP 32 (4/09 1730 LOCAL)

REF: AMMAN 2137

Classified By: DCM Gregory L. Berry for reasons 1.5 (B)(D).

General Overview

1. (C) At approximately 2245 April 8, an Embassy TDYer was shot at and slightly injured by unknown assailants near the Le Royal Hotel in Amman. Immediately following this incident the Embassy issued a phone tree message to both American and Jordanian staff notifying them of what had occurred and encouraging them to alter arrival times and routes to work for April 9. At 0900 on April 9, the Ambassador convoked the EAC where the details of what is known of the incident were discussed (details reftel). At 1400, the Embassy issued a warden message to the American community concerning the incident and at 1500 the Ambassador convoked a town hall meeting for all American employees.

2. (C) This local story is receiving some press attention despite a tumultuous 24 hours that has included both the tragic killing of Jordanian journalist and al-Jazeera correspondent Tareq Ayyoub, and the emerging scenes from Baghdad and elsewhere in Iraq of cheering and looting crowds. A sense of shock, confusion and mixed emotions at all these events appears to characterize the prevailing mood of many Jordanians at the moment.

Consular Issues

3. (U) No new issues.

GOJ Actions/Statements

4. (U) Minister of Information Mohammed al-Adwan issued a statement April 8 voicing his "strong condemnation for such (military) acts which result in numerous casualties among innocent civilians." Adwan mourned Jordanian correspondent Tareq Ayyoub "who fell (as a) martyr while covering the war on Iraq for (the) Al-Jazeera Satellite Channel."

5. (U) The Jordan Times reported that King Abdullah, in an April 8 meeting with Prime Minister Ali Abul Ragheb and representatives of economic segments "affirmed that efforts and contacts with the Arab and friendly countries will continue in order to stop the war on Iraq and ensure the delivery of assistance as soon as possible." The King went on to "stress the importance of cooperation between the public and private sectors in the country at this stage to overcome the ramifications of war on Jordanian economic sectors, particularly tourism, transport and industry." In the same meeting, the paper reported that PM Abul Ragheb "stressed the strength of the national economy and his confidence in its ability to overcome this stage."

Security

6. (U) Details of shooting incident described in para 1 are reported reftel.

Economic and Trade Developments

7. (U) Jordanian border officials tell us that normal operations resumed at the Sheikh Hussein bridge as of April 7, ending a multi-day closure caused by work stoppages on the part of Israeli customs officers.

8. (C) Irbid Chamber of Industry Chairman Maher al-Nasser visited April 8 to voice concern over the exposure faced by Jordanian companies trading under the Oil For Food program and the bilateral oil and trade protocol with Iraq. Nasser said a number of companies are facing difficulties receiving payments for contracts signed with Saddam Hussein's government. Others were unable to deliver contracted goods

and thus could not present a delivery receipt to claim payment from Jordan's Central Bank under the terms of the protocol. Nasser was quoted in the local press as saying Irbid companies are facing JD 25 million (USD 35 million) in losses as a result of these outstanding contracts. He added to us that many of these companies are already being squeezed by local banks to pay for inputs for the contracted goods, which were purchased earlier in the year on credit.

Refugee/Humanitarian Issues

¶9. (U) The Jordan-Iraq border remains open. 27 TCNs crossed into Jordan from Iraq overnight (April 8-9), while one person with document problems remains in no-man's land at the border. No Iraqi refugees entered Jordan overnight.

¶10. (S) Coalition sources confirm that flying checkpoints have been established along Hwy 10 (the Baghdad-Amman highway) inside Iraqi territory. All east-bound vehicle traffic except previously cleared humanitarian assistance convoys are being turned back.

Press

¶11. (U) CNN, BBC, Al-Jazeera and other networks are showing scenes of jubilation in Baghdad neighborhoods mid-day April 9, with reports of most if not all organized resistance from Saddam elements either gone or melting away. It is too early to get a sense of how Jordanians will react, but preliminary indications are that many are simply relieved that the war appears to be nearing its end without the huge civilian casualties that many expected. Earlier in the day, the April 8 death of a number of journalists -- and in particular Jordanian al-Jazeera correspondent Tareq Ayoub -- dominated both the local media and talk among ordinary Jordanians. Many Jordanians believe that the Arab satellite stations and other non-embedded journalists were deliberately targeted by U.S. forces. Once again we find our Arab friends distorting facts to correspond to what they want to believe.

GNEHM